



Joint Statement

Reunite and protect: Upholding the Rights of Children Deprived of Family Care in Armed Conflicts

Children deprived of family care face distinct and compounded risks in armed conflict. Entering crises with pre-existing protection gaps, they face increased risk of violence, trafficking, exploitation, deprivation of liberty, and prolonged separation from families as supervision, services and oversight systems collapse. Children with disabilities, children from ethnic minority communities, and other populations who are disproportionately placed in institutions in many contexts, face particularly profound risks.

Institutions, already shown to harm children's development and long-term outcomes, become especially dangerous in conflict. Monitoring breaks down, facilities may be attacked or repurposed, and children can be displaced without proper registration, family tracing, or best-interests determination procedures. Recent on-going conflicts, including the war in Ukraine, demonstrate how children in institutions can be moved across borders and incorrectly recorded as lacking family ties, increasing risks of disappearance, re-trafficking and long-term institutionalisation.

These risks extend across the full conflict cycle, from preparedness and emergency response to displacement and recovery. Without resilient child protection systems and sustained child care reform before crises occur, emergency responses will continue to fail the children most at risk.

We therefore urge UN Member States to:

- 1. Prevent family separation** in situations of armed conflict by strengthening family support, social protection and child protection systems, including through continued childcare reform.
- 2. Ensure child institutionalisation is not used as a default emergency response**, and prevent the construction, expansion or funding of institutions during crises, prioritising safe, appropriate family- and community-based care alternatives.
- 3. Guarantee child-centred responses, based on the best-interest of the child**, including timely registration, child-level data collection, family tracing and reunification procedures, and robust safeguards in cross-border movements, with particular attention to the needs and rights of children with disabilities.
- 4. Strengthen coordination across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts** to ensure continuity of care and protection for children separated from or deprived of parental care.
- 5. Protect access to safe and inclusive education during conflict, displacement and reintegration** as a critical safeguard against separation and unnecessary child institutionalisation.
- 6. Improve monitoring and accountability**, including through continued analysis within UN reporting mechanisms on the impact of armed conflict on children deprived of parental care.
- 7. Align national and international action with global care reform initiatives**, including the Global Charter on Children's Care Reform, to strengthen families and end child institutionalisation.
- 8. Commit to child care reform and deinstitutionalisation before crises arise, investing in resilient, family- and community-based systems that remain operational during emergencies.**

Hope and Homes for Children and Lumos stand ready to support Member States in advancing these measures.

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